

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. GINGREY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GINGREY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. TURNER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TURNER of Texas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BROWN of Ohio addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CALLING ON CASTRO TO RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to once again express my concerns regarding the inhumane treatment of political prisoners in Cuban jails.

Almost exactly 1 year ago today, Castro began his devastating crackdown on Cuba's pro-democracy movement. Knowing that his actions would be overshadowed by world events in Iraq, Castro took the opportunity to arrest over 70 nonviolent human rights advocates, pro-democracy leaders and independent journalists. Inside of a month, the detainees were tried, sentenced, and locked away in Cuban prisons.

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to call attention specifically to the plight of 20 of the prisoners arrested in the crackdown last year. These 20 dissidents, many in their 50s and 60s, are suffering from advanced illnesses, and in many cases are being denied medical care. They suffer from a variety of serious health problems, including kidney disease, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and extreme weight loss; and many of their conditions have worsened.

I would like to relay the account of one specific prisoner, Oscar Espinosa Chepe, a 63-year-old economist sentenced to 20 years in the crackdown. Espinosa is suffering from advanced cirrhosis of the liver and has lost over 40 pounds since being jailed. In a recent interview with *The Washington Post*, his wife, Miriam Leiva, says of his condition, "They are killing these people. I am convinced he was taken out of our little house for a death sentence which is supposed to be slow and painful. I do not know if I will be able to see him tomorrow or next month, or if they will just come to me and say, 'You may come and visit his grave.'"

Leiva gave her husband's account of a cell, stating that it has no windows or running water and that the lights are left on 24 hours a day. She states that her husband is unable to eat and has a fungal infection covering both of his legs.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an isolated account of one prisoner. Many similar stories of neglect and subhuman conditions have been reported by prisoners themselves and through their families.

Several prisoners who suffered heart attacks before being jailed are now suffering from worsening heart disease because of the lack of medical care. Another prisoner now requires a kidney transplant because prison conditions have further damaged his already weak kidneys.

And chances are, more stories like this are going to continue to come out of Cuba's jails. You see, about half of the 75 jailed in the crackdown last year remain in so-called "punishment cells" that measure only 3 feet by 6 feet, have no ventilation or running water, are subject to the extreme summer heat, and are infested with insects and rats. And even those prisoners who enter jail healthy will likely face health problems in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, as expected, Castro continues to deny the Red Cross and other human rights organizations access to these jails. He remains defiant about the arrests even as Cuba's relationship with friendly nations continues to deteriorate.

I urge my colleagues to join with me in calling on Castro to immediately release the most gravely ill prisoners and to grant the Red Cross immediate access to Cuban jails. It is critical that Congress not stand by and allow these human rights atrocities to continue and allow Castro's mistreatment of his prisoners to go unchecked.

A year ago when this crackdown occurred, there were many of my colleagues, some who actually are sympathetic to Castro, who came down to the floor and expressed outrage over what was going on with these prisoners. I am just afraid that a year passes and now all of a sudden there is not much mention or thought about them because people tend to forget. The bottom line is that the situation is growing worse and Castro has not shown any interest in doing anything to turn the situation around. I think it is important that we continue to speak out and point to the prisoners' plight, lest they be forgotten.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. SOUDER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. SOUDER addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia

(Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PAUL addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HENSARLING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BSE TESTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the most troubling aspect of the first case of mad cow disease is what it revealed about the cattle industry and the United States Department of Agriculture. It revealed that the USDA is not just protecting the food supply, but it is also actively promoting the cattle and meat packing industry. How well are these competing priorities balanced?

Well, the mad cow episode has exposed holes in the food safety chain. It has revealed that the USDA's policy was not one of comprehensive testing, but rather a limited sampling of a few thousand. Of the over 30 million cattle slaughtered last year, only a few thousand of these 30 million were tested for mad cow disease.

Beef, we found out, quickly disappears into the vast distribution network and is mixed with the remains of thousands of other cattle. These consolidated batches of meat are then distributed far and wide, which makes them difficult to recall, almost impossible to trace.

Currently, there is only one laboratory owned by the U.S. Department of Agriculture located in Ames, Iowa, that performs testing on meat to detect mad cow disease. The techniques used in this laboratory require several days to complete. The public is rightly concerned. Maybe the reason we have not discovered mad cow disease until this past December in the United States is because Americans have been eating the evidence.

There are responsible members of the beef industry that want to test their cattle and many consumers who want to buy this tested beef. The tests exist today that can be done quickly, cheaply, easily, and close to home. The cattlemen are willing to pay for it; customers consider tested beef worth the cost. So what is the problem? Well, our